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SUBJECT: March 19 MFA Press Briefing: The Impeccable, AmCits on the DPRK Border, Coca-Cola and Huiyuan

¶1. Key points at the March 19 MFA press briefing:

-- The United States violated Chinese and International Law by conducting activities in China's Exclusive Economic Zone.

-- China is investigating the incident involving American Citizens on the DPRK border.

-- Ambassador Wu Sike, the Chinese Ambassador to Egypt, will replace Ambassador Sun Bigan as Chinese Special Envoy for the Middle East.

-- The rejection of Coca-Cola's bid to purchase Chinese drink manufacturer Huiyuan is in keeping with China's anti-monopoly laws and is not protectionism.

-- A group of Tibetan officials recently visited the United States to give "the true picture" of Tibet.

-- While China would welcome the establishment of diplomatic relations with El Salvador, the one-China principle has not changed.

-- Regulations prohibit Chinese citizens from independently reporting for foreign news organizations.

-- China hopes France can take positive measures to bring bilateral relations back to normal development.

-- China has taken note of the U.S. issuance of Treasury Bonds, and hopes that it is effective in stimulating the U.S. economy.

Impeccable Incident and the South China Sea

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¶2. "The USNS Impeccable violated international and Chinese law and conducted activities in China's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the South China Sea without China's permission," MFA spokesperson Ma Zhaoxu said at the regularly-scheduled March 19 MFA press briefing. He urged the United States to "take effective measures to avoid similar incidents in the future." When asked about increasing Chinese patrols near the Spratly Islands, the spokesman said that China maintains "indisputable" sovereignty over the area and is justified in exercising its sovereign rights in the area.

Americans on the DPRK Border

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¶3. Asked for confirmation of the abduction of two American citizens by North Korean soldiers, the spokesperson said that China is

investigating the incident. Asked specifically to confirm the nationalities of the people involved, as well as whether North Korean soldiers frequently cross into Chinese territory, the spokesman stated he had no further information on the matter.

Kim Yong-il's Visit to China

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13. Asked about North Korean Premier Kim Yong-il's March 18 visit to Beijing and his meetings with Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Premier Wen Jiabao, the spokesman said that the two sides had in-depth discussions and exchanged views on bilateral relations and issues of common interest. The increase in communication and coordination between the two sides will be conducive to regional peace and stability. When asked specifically if the Six-Party Talks or North Korea's satellite test were discussed, the spokesman responded that Premier Wen Jiabao said the parties should "push for the Six-Party Talks" and that China wants to play a constructive role in the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Asked about timing of resuming talks and whether China is urging the DPRK to cancel its planned satellite test, the spokesman responded that China would like the Six-Party Talks to resume as soon as possible but that "conditions must be ripe" and all six parties must agree on a date. China will continue to consult and coordinate with other parties to promote peace talks and contribute to denuclearization.

Restrictions on Journalism Organizations

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14. Asked a question regarding a Human Rights Watch report that

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stated China is tightening controls on foreign journalism organizations by placing restrictions on their Chinese employees, the spokesman responded that relevant regulations in China stipulate that Chinese citizens may not independently report for foreign news agencies but can work in supporting roles. "Conditions are not yet ripe" for Chinese citizens to do independent reporting. China welcomes foreign news organizations and will continue to support them, and as such, the accusations are groundless. Ma expressed hope that journalists will abide by all Chinese laws, which will be conducive to their reporting activities.

Coca-Cola's Bid for Huiyuan

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15. The rejection of Coca-Cola's bid to purchase Chinese drink manufacturer Huiyuan is in keeping with China's anti-monopoly laws and is not related to trade protectionism, the spokesman said. China's policies of reform and opening up have not changed, he said, noting that in the Chinese marketplace, Coke products compete with Chinese drinks as well as with beverages from all around the world. Asked if China feared a backlash against Chinese investments in sensitive industries around the world, such as mining, the spokesperson reiterated that the decision is not protectionism. China will continue its open market policies and continues to welcome foreign investment.

Tibetan Leaders Visit the United States

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16. The delegation of officials from Tibet that visited the United States included deputies to the National People's Congress, the spokesman said. The group held exchanges in political and academic circles to increase the understanding of Americans regarding the "true picture of Tibet."

El Salvador to Recognize Both China and Taiwan?

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17. Asked about rumors that El Salvador's new president may consider establishing diplomatic relations with China while maintaining its relations with Taiwan, the spokesman said that no matter what changes occur in the world, the PRC's one-China principle will never change. In the spirit of the UN Charter and the five principles of

peaceful existence, China welcomes relations with El Salvador. The Chinese people have friendly feelings towards the people of El Salvador and are ready to have mutual cooperation with them.

Hu Jintao and Nicolas Sarkozy to Meet at G-20?

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¶ 18. Asked whether Chinese President Hu Jintao and French President Nicolas Sarkozy would meet at the G-20 summit in London, the spokesman responded that both Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and Premier Wen Jiabao have expressed China's position on relations with France. While China has always placed great importance on its relations with France, the current problems in the bilateral relationship are known to all. China hopes France can take positive measures to bring bilateral relations back to normal development.

Issuance of U.S. Treasury Bonds

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¶ 19. China has taken note of the U.S. Government's attempt to increase liquidity through the issuance of Treasury Bonds, the spokesman said. China hopes that the measures are effective in stimulating the U.S. economy and helping other countries in the world to develop their economies in a healthy manner. He expressed hope that China's assets in the United States remain safe.

Japan in the Fight Against Somali Piracy

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¶ 110. Regarding Japan sending ships from its Maritime Self-Defense Forces to help fight Somali piracy, the spokesman said that China upholds the view that within the UN framework and relevant international law, all countries should cooperate to help fight piracy.

Chinese and Japanese Defense Ministers

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¶ 111. The spokesman said the Chinese and Japanese Defense Ministers will meet in Beijing March 20 for consultations. Enhanced communication between the two sides will be conducive to the development of long-term bilateral relations, he said.

New Special Envoy for the Middle East

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¶ 112. Ambassador Wu Sike, the current Chinese Ambassador to Egypt, will replace Sun Bigan as China's Middle East Envoy, the spokesman said. Prior to his position as Ambassador to Egypt, Ambassador Wu also served as the Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and the First Representative Plenipotentiary to the League of Arab Nations.

¶ 113. VISITS: Kazakh Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin will visit China March 29-31.

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